Wasatch Wave Heber City, U

Let's Get Acquai

by Ruby Compton
Wave Columnist

Henry Samuel Alexander was a prominent man in Wasatch County who lived a very busy and interesting life. I do hope you folks like the articles I write about the early settlers of this valley.

Henry S. Alexander was born in Washington County, Vermont, on July 12, 1823, the son of Alvah and Phoebe Huston Alexander. When he was eight years old, Henry, both parents, a brother and three sisters were baptized into the L.D.S. Church in 1831. In 1841, the Alexander's sold their property in Northfield, Washington County, Vermont, and moved to Nauvoo, Ill. They lived there until the church members were driven out by the mobs in 1846, then they moved on to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and settled there.

Henry had married Mary Marstella, of Harper's Ferry and she died in 1847. While living in Council Bluffs he married June Huston in 1848, she died shortly after the birth of their son, Charles.

In 1849 Henry S. Alexander decided to go west with a freight train of Livingston and Kinkaid. He arrived in Salt Lake in Sept. of that year.

Henry had time to gather his thoughts and realize that the future was promising, and that he should put unhappiness behind him as there was nothing he could do about it. The rigors endured while taking the freight overland helped him to appreciate what he had left, and he learned to look ahead with faith in the future.

During the year of 1850, he lived in Salt Lake. He met and later married Sarah Simonds Miles on July 23, 1850. Sarah was the daughter of Samuel and Prudence Marks Miles; she was born on Dec. 27, 1831, in Freedom, Cattargus County, New York. She, her parents and brothers joined the L.D.S. Church in 1839, when she was eight years old. Her father was a successful tailor by trade and even at that tender age, she learned a lot by watching him as often as she could.

When the family decided to move west in 1849, her father decided to return to the old home in Connecticut to bid his relatives goodbye before going west; he died on the way there. His wife, Prudence, gathered their family and they all came west in 1848; there was Ira and Gustave Miles, half brothers, William and Samuel, Sarah S. and her younger brother, Arson. They settled in Salt Lake and later some of them went on to Wanship and surrounding areas. I know of my mother's cousin, Stan Marchant, whose mother was a Miles, Stan married Hattie Hanks, a sister of Corey Hanks and Eunice Hanks Cullimore of Charleston, Ut. But to get back to the article:

Sarah S. Alexander was an expert seamstress and she was raised to appreciate all things of refinement, this was a dominant trait throughout her life; she became an excellent nurse as she raised her ten children and helped others in need of her assistance.

Sarah's mother died in Salt Lake in 1851. Sarah's first child, Henry Miles Alexander, was born Sept. 20, 1852, and in Oct. of 1852, Phoebe Huston Alexander and family arrived in Salt Lake City, Ut. from Council Bluffs, Iowa. Henry was so glad to see them, especially his dear brother Alva Jedathan Alexander. He was quite a stranger to his four year old son, but he and Sarah soon loved him dearly, Henry had been called by Brigham Young to build and operate a sawmill in South Mill Creek, where he sawed the first shingles to be made in Utah. He was there until Brigham Young called him to go on a colonization mission to Carson Valley, Nevada, in the early part of 1856. Enoch Reese was in charge of the party but he turned leadership over to Henry S. Alexander when the party of colonizers ran out of water in the great western desert. They were three days without water and their tongues were swollen and protruding from their mouths with thirst, when some Indians came upon them, one of them told Henry where to find water and the party was saved.

When they reached Car Valley, they set about coloni: the area, and Sarah gave birt her first daughter, Sarah Hen tta near the settlement of Virg City in 1856. Henry was reca to Salt Lake that fall. He retur to Carson Valley in early 1857, was recalled again because of Johnston Army trouble. He w to Lehi, Ut. in 1858 and from th back to South Mill Creek where took charge of the sawmill fo time. It seemed that where e there was a great need for build material, Brigham Young ca him to go. Later, he built Wanship Mill on Silver Cr where he supplied the timbers the railroad tunnel in E Canyon.

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In 1871, he moved his family to Midway, Utah. He bought a steam mill in Spanish Fork Canyon, he also had a mill in McHenry's Canyon and later, one in Daniel Canyon. He took a lively interest in church and civic activities in upper Provo Valley, as this was called. On April 10, 1870, Henry Samuel Alexander was made Presiding Elder over the Midway branch of the LDS Church with Van Wagnen and John Huber as counselors.

In 1877 Provo Valley was given the name Wasatch Stake. Abram Hatch, who had been directed to sell his interests in Lehi, Utah, in 1867, and move to Heber, by Brigham Young, became a businessman of great influence. He owned the Heber Exchange, the Heber Flour Mill east of Heber, farm land, and other businesses in the area. The home he owned on Center Street is now a bank. He worked hard to build his fortune and was honest in his dealings. Abram Hatch was chosen to be the new Wasatch Stake's president. He chose Thomas H. Giles and Henry S. Alexander as his counselors.

The crossing on Provo River was treacherous in high water and the dirt roads were often quagmires when it rained hard in the valley, so Henry sold his home in Midway and built a large frame home in Heber on the northwest corner of 2nd East and Center Street. He lived near Pres. Abram Hatch so he and Thomas H. Giles and Pres. Hatch could really take care of the people entrusted in their territory which ran clear to the border of Colorado. These three men devoted all their energies to improving conditions and serving the people in their stake until they were released in 1901. They were the ones responsible for laying out the township of Vernal, Utah. The small but important settlement of Ashley had been the center of activity prior to that in the area. There were many activities and challenges as the needs of settlers were to be met.

When Henry S. Alexander was released in 1901, he was made a patriarch of the church. He served in this position until he died on March 6, 1903. Sarah S. Miles Alexander died Jan. 14, 1904.

Their children were: Henry Miles Alexander who married Sarah Jane Ross; Sarah Henerietta (known as Nettie) married Geo. A. Clift; Lelia Naomi; William M.; Lilly May married Sidney Epperson; Clara Prudence married Edward D. Clyde; Kate Josephine married Robert Turner; James Monroe; Orpha Luella; George Snyder; and Charles, Henry's son from a former marriage. All of the children grew to adulthood and married.

Great grandchildren of Henry and Sarah Alexander still living in Wasatch county are: Roberta Bond Giles, DeEsta Bond Jordan, Rex C. McDonald, Ruby M. Compton, Lucile Clift McMillan and Bill R. Clift, grandchildren of "Nettie" and Geo. A. Clift. Maude Epperson McPhie, Reva Epperson Allison, Vone Epperson Simmons, granddaughters of Henry Miles and Sarah Ross Alexander. Fay Watkins Bonner, Gwyne Watkins Schear, Roberta Watkins Overn, are granddaughters of Kate Alexander Turner. Barbara Clyde Allred is the granddaughter of Clara Alexander and Edward D. Clyde.